



Congress of the United States House of Representatives

November 9, 2018

The Honorable Ryan Zinke
Secretary of Interior
U.S. Department of Interior
1849 C Street, NW
Washington, D.C. 20240

RE: Response to Federal Register Notice of October 10, 2018 requesting comment
on proposed Methow mineral withdrawal

Dear Secretary Zinke:

I am writing to reiterate my strong support for the proposed mineral withdrawal in the Methow Headwaters, located in the 4th Congressional District of the State of Washington. I respectfully request that your agency heed the U.S. Forest Service's recommendation for a 20-year mineral withdrawal for the 340,079-acre region and complete all necessary approvals by the end of the two-year segregation period, December 30, 2018.

As I have previously stated, the proposed withdrawal is entirely consistent with Department of Interior (DOI) and Department of Agriculture (USDA) initiatives to create a conservation legacy, promote agriculture and rural prosperity, and be a good neighbor. Furthermore, the withdrawal supports the objectives of *Secretarial Order 3362: Improving Habitat Quality in Western Big-Game Winter Range and Migration Corridors* in its efforts to enhance and improve the quality of big-game winter range and migration corridor habitat. The Methow Valley and the headwaters region is home to the state's largest migratory mule deer herd, and approximately 80 percent of the herd moves through or resides in the proposed withdrawal area. With some years providing one million recreational days for deer hunting statewide, this herd brings significant economic stimulus to the region and contributes to the \$150-million-dollar recreation economy in Okanogan County.

The Methow Valley lies in the northwestern portion of my District and serves as the eastern gateway to North Cascades National Park. The area is known for its expansive scenic vistas, agriculture, fishing and hunting, year-round recreational opportunities, and rural way of life. The local economy is dependent on the quality of the natural environment and public lands that surround the Valley. The high-quality water that flows from the Methow Headwaters is a vital component to our region's diverse agricultural

economy, including supporting a record year for Central Washington apple growers in 2017.

There has been near unanimous and bipartisan support for the Methow Headwaters mineral withdrawal. From local, county, and state elected officials to the local Chamber of Commerce and more than 135 businesses, tribal nations, sportsmen groups, and farmers, this proposal has gained broad-based support. In a county that embraces resource development and has a long history of mining, it is widely recognized that this specific proposal for the Methow Valley has strong merit.

In February 2018, I wrote to you and U.S. Department of Agriculture Secretary Sonny Perdue expressing my support for this proposal and requesting specific actions, including: (1) completing the U.S. Forest Service environmental review process; (2) holding the non-decisional public meeting as required per Section 204 of the Federal Land Policy and Management Act; and (3) reviewing the final recommendation by the U.S. Forest Service by the end of the segregation period, December 30, 2018. The U.S. Forest Service has completed the Environmental Assessment and issued a final recommendation for a 20-year mineral withdrawal for the entirety of the 340,079-acre Methow Headwaters region. I am pleased that the public meeting will be held November 13 in the Methow Valley and am grateful the voices of my constituents and the local communities will be heard. I look forward to working with your Department to ensure the agency completes its review and issues a final decision by December 30, 2018.

I wholeheartedly support your commitment to build robust, sustainable communities for generations to come, and I believe the Methow Headwaters mineral withdrawal will aid this effort in Central Washington. I welcome the opportunity to work closely with you on this important and widely supported effort. On behalf of the 4th Congressional District, thank you for your leadership on this issue.

Sincerely,



Dan Newhouse
Member of Congress

Cc:

Joe Balash, Assistant Secretary of Lands and Minerals, Department of Interior
Brian Steed, Acting Director, Bureau of Land Management
Jamie Connell, Regional Director, WA/OR State Office, Bureau of Land Management